

## **Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Policy**

This policy was drawn up to inform parents/guardians of the curriculum and provision of Relationships and Sexuality Education in Holy Family Community School. Holy Family Community School wishes to support parents/guardians in this important aspect of a young person's education and preparation for life. The school has a complementary role in preparing young people for their place in society. The policy was drawn up in consultation with the staff, parents, students, and Board of Management of the school. It was adopted as an official school policy by the Board of Management on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Regular monitoring, evaluating and reviewing of the RSE programme is facilitated by the SPHE Coordinator and involves students, parents, staff and the Board of Management.

### **The School's Vision Statement**

The Holy Family Community School is a community of students, staff, parents, and Board of Management.

- We are committed to the development of a community of learners concerned for each individual in our care.
- We believe that education provides opportunity for all.
- We strive for excellence in all areas.
- We nurture the well-being of all so that they may grow in knowledge, integrity, and compassion.

We aim to provide:

- A school which promotes academic excellence and enables all students to realise their full potential.
- A programme, curricular and extra-curricular, which develops the whole person.
- A Christian value system encompassing respect, responsibility, co-operation, honesty, fairness and friendship.
- A partnership with parents, primary schools and the local community.

### **Definition of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE)**

Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a lifelong process of acquiring knowledge, understanding and skills which enable students to develop attitudes, beliefs and values about sexual identity, relationships and intimacy.

### **Relationship of RSE to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)**

At Junior Cycle, the RSE programme is a module within the SPHE programme. The NCCA Draft Guidelines for RSE state that SPHE is "spiral, developmental in nature and age-appropriate in content and methodology". The RSE programme is designed to follow this principle and pattern. SPHE supports the development of self-esteem, assertive communication, and decision making skills, all of which complement the RSE programme.

## **RSE Aims and Objectives**

### **RSE Aims:**

RSE, which is located in the overall framework of SPHE, has as its specific aims:

- To help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships;
- To promote an understanding of sexuality;
- To promote a positive attitude towards one's sexuality and in one's relationships with others;
- To promote knowledge of and respect for reproduction;
- To enable young people to develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework.

### **RSE Objectives**

RSE should enable students to:

- Acquire the understanding and skills necessary to form healthy friendships and relationships;
- Develop a positive sense of self-awareness, and the skills for building and maintaining self-esteem;
- Become aware of the variety of ways in which individuals grow and change, especially during adolescence, and to develop respect for difference between individuals;
- Understand human physiology with particular reference to the reproductive cycle, human fertility and sexually transmitted infections (STIs);
- Understand sexual development and identity and explore aspects of sexuality including sex roles, stereotyping, gender issues and cultural influences on sexuality;
- Value family life and appreciate the responsibilities of parenthood;
- Develop strategies for decisions and actions consistent with personal moral integrity and respectful of the rights and dignity of others;
- Develop skills for coping with peer pressure, conflict and threats to personal safety (TRUST, 2009).

## **RSE Provision**

The Board of Management recognises its responsibility to ensure that the RSE programme is taught throughout junior and senior cycle. It is school policy that the RSE programme is taught by the trained SPHE/RSE teachers on our staff.

Section 1.5.1 of the Child Protection Procedures states, "All post-primary schools are also required to have a Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme at senior cycle." Schools have an obligation to teach RSE (6 classes a year), even in the absence of a timetabled SPHE class. The time allocation recommended is six periods of 40-minute classes per year according to Circular M0037/201.

RSE at Junior Cycle is delivered within the SPHE programme. The SPHE specification was developed by the NCCA. SPHE is part of Wellbeing and is mandatory in all Junior Cycle years. The Wellbeing Guidelines state that 70 hours of SPHE must be delivered over the three years of Junior Cycle.

In Holy Family Community School the provision of RSE includes mandatory Child Protection lessons. This is referred to as RSE+.

- All Junior Cycle students study 8 hours of RSE+ per year within their SPHE classes.
- Transition Year students study a stand-alone 11 week RSE+ module.
- In Fifth and Sixth year, non-LVCP students study 10 hours of RSE+, within their SPHE classes. LVCP students in fifth and sixth year study a ten-week stand-alone RSE+ module within RE.
- LCA students study 10 hours of RSE+ within Social Health in both years.

Other structures which support the provision of RSE in our school include:

- SPHE, RE, CSPE, Science, Biology and Home Economics.
- Timetabled Pastoral Care Time.
- Pastoral Care system including Year Heads, Class Tutors and Mentors for First Years.
- School Counsellors, Chaplain and SEN Coordinator.
- Code of Behaviour and Discipline, Anti-bullying Policy, Child Safeguarding Statement.
- Amber Flag Committee.
- Positive Mental Health Week.
- Stand Up/LGBTI+ Week.

### **Management and Organisation of RSE**

- The school has a coordinator of SPHE.
- The SPHE and RSE Teams:
  - are given time to meet on school planning days.
  - are given opportunities to attend relevant Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses and an updated record of CPD training is maintained by the SPHE Coordinator.
  - deliver in-school CPD.
  - Have access to a structured programme and a library of appropriate core and supplementary resources.
  - share information received at CPD via OneDrive.

### **Informing and Involving Parents**

A text message is sent to all parents at the beginning of the school year referring them to the school website where they can find information on the content of the RSE programme. The Parents' Council were consulted regarding the development of the RSE Policy and are involved in the review.

### **Withdrawing students from the RSE programme:**

- The RSE+ programme incorporates mandatory Child Protection lessons. Parents are not permitted to withdraw students from the Child Protection lessons.

- If parents wish to withdraw their child from RSE lessons, they will be invited by the school to discuss the matter with the SPHE Coordinator and other relevant staff.
- Where a student has been withdrawn from RSE alternative arrangements for the supervision of the student will be agreed with the parents.

**Giving of Advice:**

Teachers may provide students with education and information about where and from whom they can receive confidential sexual advice and treatment, e.g. their doctor or other suitable agency such as mental health service providers.

**Students with Additional Needs**

It is school policy that students will not be removed from RSE classes to receive learning support. Students with Additional Needs may need more help than others in coping with the physical and emotional aspects of growing up.

**Confidentiality and Child Protection:**

Disclosures will be treated confidentially subject to the limitations and requirements of the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children. Child protection concerns must be reported to Tusla. Students in all years receive information on the age of consent within RSE which, under the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act, 2006, is 17 years for both males and females.